

The Degeneration of Bharat

& Other Poems

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THE DEGENERATION OF BHARAT

PART ONE: Meet Hari Chand

Hari Chand—investigative journalist
Determined to illuminate
The terminal decline of Bharat;
With a special roving commission
From Anil Patil,
Concerned kshatriya of Maharashtra
Province: late professor of dermatology
At Jizan Health College,
Saudi Arabia,
Now expatriated to New Zealand;
Living along the outreaches
Of the Western world,
In Tauranga,
Dispensing
Ayurvedic remedies
To dissipated Europeans

O where did it all go wrong?

When Patanjali's sutras
Explained the Vedic scheme
Siddharta's wheel of Dharma
Already ruled supreme.
While Krishna and Arjuna
Discussed the pith of life
The chariots of ignorance
Disseminated strife.
At Vulture's Peak, the Buddha
Revealed the Tantric path;
But my dear friend, Anil Patil,
Only makes me laugh!

The Mughals came
The Mughals built;
Shah Jihan, to his cost
Spent all his wealth on Mumtaza

Until his realm was lost.
In latter days he viewed "the Taj"
Through iron prison bars
Incarcerated by a son
Who'd kicked him in the arse.

Caste, Caste, Caste, Caste;
Caste deflated India...
If I can't touch you,
And you can't touch me,
How happy can we ever be?

Brahmin priests and all their rituals,
Friends to the worldly ones,
Undid India.

Brahma. Vishnu. Shiva.
Did you ever really need them?
Brahma created without their incantations.
Vishnu, Krishna, Buddha,

Sustained and enlightened, indifferent to their technical mumbo-jumbo:

Shiva's dance of death destroys, regardless of Brahminical threads and pride.

Pride destroyed India.

And yet

Avalokiteshvara's infinite compassion still abounds;

His thousand arms waiting to rescue

All sentient beings

From the chains of their own ignorance,

Into the Sambhogakaya :

The Buddhafield.

Om Mani Padme Hum.

I watched a snake charmer's cheap trickeries

Outside Rajghat.

He wanted money.

Is it possible that one who is able to control

The dancing snake head

Can be in need of a few coppers from me?

O dissolute nation

Who had everything the world systems can provide,

But threw it all away--

What price must you pay

For your own unvirtue?

Hari Chand's a secret guy;

You'll find him in the bar,

Listening to private talk

(Not near, nor yet too far).

Whenever India's discussed,

He's got it on his mind

That something just might be picked up

Explaining her decline.
And as we know, he works for one
Inextricably bound
To the travails of Bharat and
The Ganges' rushing sound.
It's good to know that even when
Anil is in his dreams
Hari Chand is on the case
And life's not what it seems.

PART TWO: Delhi Musings

I spent some time in Delhi's maze
Of beggars, rickshaws, bikes and shit;
And everywhere I felt the gaze
Of those who would abandon it

A mother with her bundled child,
Tapped upon the moving glass.

Her eyes roamed, desperate and wild,
And wouldn't let me pass.

I offered up some gift of notes
And suddenly there came
A hundred more in tattered coats
And each one had no name.

I looked upon their greedy eyes,
Then waved the driver on;
And inwardly, without surprise,
I found compassion gone.

The poor and desolate are our friends,
They teach us generosity;
Let's love our enemies better than our relatives
(As those who hate us give an opportunity for the practice of
patience).

Perhaps one day I can become wild and homeless myself,
Though without the unmindfulness of a Delhi street beggar;
No, no, but with the green tinge of an enlightened Milarepa
Seeing beyond the limitations of
Nirmanakaya.

Ashkhardan is beautiful
And, in just five years,
Volunteers built its stone temple
In the old way, fashioned from the imagination and love,
Without steel and iron.
Krishna consciousness pervades the essence.
Om Hari Krishna
Om Hari Krishna
Om Om Om

Hari Chand is on the case. He sees all, but says little. Everything is
placed in the balance.

Dr. Anil will have his answer.

PART THREE: Dr. Anil in Motion and Still Life

Dr. Anil gave up all his glamour

When he travelled to Jizan.

Nevertheless,

He tried to show the Jizanis,

Through an innate pride in his nation,

The glory of the Vedas:

What they are, had been, and ever would be.

Even when they scoffed,

And asked him if the sacred cow had been his mother,

He persevered,

Watching old movies about Gods and Avatars

In his pleasing home,

Surrounded by a loving family:

His wife, Priyanka,

And blessed daughter Vishakha

Who, as the reincarnation of Anil's maternal grandmother,

Was (somehow) close to Shiva

Lord of the dance.

Dr. Anil, disciple of Shankacharya,

Why did you come to Jizan?

Get away as quick as you can!

Talking's just a barrier

To the enlightenment of man.

Leave it all to Hari... Hari Chand.

Hari's built for sniffing out the meaning of life,

And the reasons for strife.

He's a smooth operator

And sooner or later

He'll find out all you want to know

Of virtue, knowledge, death and View:

He'll show you what to do,

Explain the transcendental light

Of wisdom, just for you.

Om Hari Hari Chand.

Take refuge in the Hari.

PART FOUR: Vulture's Peak

Rajgir was the setting for
The Dharma's second spin:
The prajnaparamita core
Of emptiness within.
Thus have I heard: at Vulture's Peak
The Thusly-Gone one taught
All aspirants who truly seek
To find a secret thought.
"Nam m'yoho rengo kyo":
The blessings showered down;
The diamond and the lotus show
The heart within the crown.
Assembled Bodhisattvas watched
Shunyata's face arise
From Union with Emptiness
(And in the Buddha's eyes).
Oh India you were not fit
To learn the Tantric truth

From Uddiyana's great pandit
(Nor Krishna's guileless youth).
Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswat:
Sweet Gangetic plains!
Holy rivers of Bharat,
Filled by monsoon rains!
Why did the flowing Dharma cease?
Why was the Tantra dumb?
Why did that mighty soul decrease?
Why didn't Moksha come?
Why did the Buddha at Rajgir
Decide to hide the truth,
From India and all the world,
In Nagar serpent tooth?
Oh why is Ramakrishna's faith,
Nandranath's noble jewels,
Diluted by some Pretan wraith
Into a billion fools?

PART FIVE: Hari Reports Back to Anil

Slowly,

Anil rebuilds his life in Tauranga;

And even Vishakha,

And his dear departed grandmother

(Who now holds a New Zealand passport),

Is/are content.

Life is good.

Furthermore,

Hari Chand's report

Has just arrived (from Delhi) giving meaty food for thought.

According to Hari

Life is a bitch

And we just have to try and get over it.

Anil (on the whole) finds himself in concurrence with these noble sentiments.

Om Tat Sat!

Leitmotiv

(Cosima was the first name of Richard Wagner's wife)

"Come Cosima Cosima, comfort the man,
Whose music will sound as long as lips can.
Siegfried shall rule and the jews shall be burnt;
The lesson of fascist fear must be learnt."

"I'm coming, I'm coming, my Richard" says she,
As long as men live your music will be.
The gas chambers come and the gas chambers go,
But your music divine will continue to flow."

"Come Cosima Cosima, come to your dear,
My music will sound as long as men hear.
The weak shall be slain, and the strong are the good;
The warrior's sword shall reek with thin blood."

"Oh Richard my Richard, I'm here at your side,
For as long as men breathe will your music abide.

The heroes shall rule in a world full of light,
Where the poor and the wretched are minus their sight.”

“Cosima Cosima, thanks for your care;
My music will always play through the air.
The lives of the weak and the man on the cross,
Shall not, given time, be thought a great loss.
For only the strongest deserve to exist,
And my music through daylight and time will persist.”

Scene From An English Public House

How much do you truly know?

I speak and speak and you inveterate charlatan

Nod your head with great deliberation.

Aesthetic sensibilities solidifying

Into politics, you nod and nod your head

As if to say: "Precisely! Exactly what I've always said
Myself." I wonder if you really know?

Surely one should change one's life

If some idea (latent, but embedded in the brain)

Bursts into vigour:

As the stalk bursts into flower after rain!

(And yet you say your mind is fertilized by words).

Perhaps I am insistent after all.

It is not now the fashion to insist;

Rather, one should cleverly imply

The moral stealthily within the gist.

You nod your head. "Exactly! You are right!
(And everything you say is true tonight).

A Love Song

Encountering my image in your radiant eyes

I love myself (reflected

In that glow of dancing

(Dancing light)

And almost feel a sense of rash delight

As knowingly I lead you on

With similes and smiles

In your animation

My own perfection is perfected;

My beauty forms through your illumination,

Defines itself in your translucent light.

Then (softly iridescent) it lies upon the night.

An Academic Interlude

A slender girl in tight blue jeans
Pushes her backside in my face.
One part responds, but would prefer
If it were tight in frilly lace.

Poised along the “Classics” stand
She thumbs this month’s *Athaenium*,
Perfectly positioned for
Two fingers snapping on her bum.

A Little Consolation

Just lately I've been bored. The kick has gone
From socializing in some city dive
With the smart set. I still remember one
Girl who assured me she'd forever live
Under my influence: her golden hair
Reduced me to a state of tenderness
Until eventually I did not care
For anything except each new caress
Administered by her. I hear that now
She's living with a student from Iraq
And copulates with him between each row
On Wittgenstein or nuclear attack
From the warmongers of the East and West.
He's reading Marx. She is a nagging pest!

Surrender

Let your Libran heart's Aquarian moon
Irradiate my presence as you play
With sunbeams in the fading afternoon
Or glide at night along the milky way.

Allow my influence to penetrate
Deep within the magic of your soul.
Believe me, when I tell you that our fate
Is bound within one tender, loving whole.

Our hearts and minds are really purple clouds
Which glitter in a sable firmament;
And all your mist of gold simply enshrouds
Perfection in the garb of sentiment.

Surrender to this cool, clear intellect,
Allow yourself to die and live in me;
And I'll explain each new changing aspect
Of everything you feel but do not see.

Face-To-Face

The gods were playing cards inside a room
Adorned with fading pictures from the past
And lit by a single lamp. Outside, the moon
Hung huge and swollen: in the game a fast
Trick was pulled by a great muscled god
Dressed all in black (an Ace slid from his sleeve
Into position). Suddenly a nod
Passed across the table. "Why I believe
That someone here's ratting on his friends."
Said one dressed in a spotless suit of white.
"Whoever tries a double-cross contends
With me and my associates." A fight
Erupts with fury in an enclosed space;
Guns are fired off: I see you face-to-face!

She Was A Kind of Lover

She was a kind of lover,
One I had never annoyed;
She reminded me of someone other,
Elsewhere (lost in the void).

Her hair was a shade of auburn
And her body was all scented in sweet
Roses and daffodils: incense burned
Each day for innumerable weeks.

Of names she had none: she was nameless;
Her eyes a bottomless sea;
A glimmering, sparkling, flame-blessed
Lover's repository.

At last she went out of fashion
(And that's when she flared to her best),
Like a dream you have sometimes imagined;
A light unutterableness.

Remembered Victories

I still remember taking a short trip
Across to Cardiff to see Cymbeline's
Revival with a blonde who had the zip
Of an expensive pair of tight, blue jeans.

The theatre is vague and all the fire
That's kindled by the Bard's interpreters
Provides a back-drop to my love (desire),
As all my strength is pitted against hers.

The action is uncertain: in her eyes
I see the changing colours mistily
Admit she's undermanned. The actor's cries
Are busy raised in celebrating me!

Three years later all my battles are
Attritional: remembered victories
Merely remind me that a lifetime's war
Is won or lost by very slow degrees.

Travelling Through The Sun-Lit Cyclades

Travelling through the sun-lit Cyclades,
I thought about romances from the past;
Of mighty Ulysses strapped to the mast
Unmanned by sweet deceptive melodies
Of siren lovers: Priam on his knees
Cursing Paris for that strange and vast
Emotion men call love. One only sees
That certain things were sure from first to last.
What is it in a single woman's eyes
Or mouth, or lip, or speech or smooth white breast,
That make men lose their reason and at once
Begin to shrewdly plot and to devise
Schemes and affairs that put love to the test,
Until the world itself has no defense.